

Iowa Department of Public Health Fiscal Year 2011 Annual Report

Iowa Communications Network Videoconferencing Savings Report



This report is prepared pursuant to Iowa Code, Chapter 8D.10

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ICN – A link to public health partners

The Iowa Department of Public Health (IDPH) uses videoconferencing via the Iowa Communications Network (ICN) as a link to public health workers, other government departments, and the general public. It is one of the forms of communication IDPH uses between the department and its partners.

The ICN system is a resource to IDPH as well as the public. Not only does it connect people in a time of need; it is a tool for educating the public health workforce and partnering with our constituents.

Besides using online meetings and webinars, the ICN is one avenue for updating IDPH's constituents on important health issues. Thus, local agency staff, board members, and the public are more likely to participate on task forces or committees if the meetings are held using the ICN. For many Iowans, a two-hour meeting in a single location such as Des Moines requires almost a full day away from their regular work.

ICN sessions increase participation

The ICN has proven to be useful in other areas as well. Using the ICN for public hearings on proposed rules or grants has made them more convenient to interested parties throughout Iowa. In many cases, use of the ICN made it possible to hold training sessions that would probably not have occurred without the ICN. Additionally, participation in other training sessions was increased because the sessions were offered locally to the majority of the participants over the ICN rather than only at a single distant site.

To ensure that every possible benefit from the ICN system is utilized, IDPH collects information during the year. This information is gathered via evaluations that are sent to the lead person who initiated the ICN event, as identified on the ICN reservation.

Evaluation comments illustrate benefits of ICN

“More people had the opportunity to attend the public hearing via ICN.”

“Participants like the convenience of viewing the broadcast in or near their city, rather than traveling a long distance.”

“More people were able to attend this meeting via ICN than if it had been held face to face. It also saves money since attendees don't have to commute to Des Moines.”

“Saves travel time and costs.”

Cost savings

The use of ICN videoconferencing is one component of IDPH's operation. In FY 2011, approximately 450 people participated in ICN meetings. IDPH's cost savings using the ICN was \$41,061.